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ABSTRACT

It was the purpose of this investigation to ascertain and evaluate the response of graduate students in Counselor Education and Rehabilitation Counseling to their experiences in an introductory course in Human Relations. This course was an integral part of their counselor preparation program. We wished to consider the implications of these student responses for future counselor preparation. An evaluation instrument was constructed and mailed to 340 subjects who had completed the course one or two or three years previously. A total of 166 (49 percent) were returned, and the responses were statistically analyzed. Indications are that the Human Relations experience tended to facilitate the educational and/or personal functioning of the members who participated. (Author)

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GRADUATE STUDENTS IN COUNSELING AND GUIDANCE PERCEPTION OF A BASIC COURSE IN HUMAN RELATIONS: ONE OR TWO OR THREE YEARS LATER

Abstract

It was the purpose of this investigation to ascertain and evaluate the responses of graduate students in Counselor Education and Rehabilitation Counseling to their experiences in an introductory course in Human Relations. This course was an integral part of their counselor preparation program. We wished to consider the implications of these student responses for future counselor preparation. An evaluation instrument was constructed and mailed to 340 subjects who had completed the course one or two or three years previously. A total of 166 (49%) were returned, and the responses were statistically analyzed. Indications are that the Human Relations experience tended to facilitate the educational and/or personal functioning of the members who participated.

INTRODUCTION

Laboratory training with a personal growth focus has been referenced by Eddy and Labin (1971) as an educational method that emphasizes experience-based learning activities. Participants are involved in large and small group experiences which are both group process and personal growth centered. Recent articles testify to the interest of counselor educators in the use of this particular group emphasis as an essential part of counselor preparation (Foreman, 1967, Morris, Pflugrath, Emery, 1969, Lyrick, 1971).

Research has focused upon the definition, process, and outcome of Laboratory Training (Bradford, Gibb, Benne, 1964; Schein, Bennis, 1965), the use of Laboratory Training as a tool for counselor preparation (Reddy, 1970) and the personality characteristics of participants in Laboratory Training (Olch, Snow, 1970).

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This study was designed to assess the perception of graduates in counselor education of their experience in a course in human relations one or two or three years later. The primary goals of this course were two-fold: personal growth and group skills.

Questions to be answered. The major question to be answered was: Does an introductory course in Human Relations serve an important function in the preparation of counselors for multiple settings, and should such a course be continued as an integral part of counselor preparation?

The following subquestions were generated in an attempt to answer the major question posed above.

1. Does the Human Relations Course experience enhance the educational and/or personal functioning of the members who participate (Do the participants view the experience as valuable)?

2. What effect does the passage of time have on the participants level of personal and/or educational functioning and on their willingness to participate again in a Human Relations class.

3. Would participants elect to again participate in a similar experience?

4. Who was (were) the most significant person (persons) in the Human Relations class?

5. Was the marathon weekend an essential part of the Human Relations experience?

METHOD

Human relations class. The human relations class focused upon personal growth and group skills. Personal growth may be delimited to include an increased skill in personal communication such that one sees, hears, recalls, and more effectively responds to messages and/or initiates messages. Another dimension of personal growth is self awareness--one explores, understands, and chooses to act (or not act). One learns to place a cognitive perspective upon his emotions such that he can control (understands) his own behavior more effectively in a here-and-now environment.

Group skills include an increased understanding of the content and process of effective groups. Through both structured, task-oriented and encounter-type group experiences, one grows to better understand the meaning of productive group membership, the functions of shared leadership and the building of meaningful interpersonal relationships.

This course was designed to be taken during a student's first semester of graduate work. For those few students who chose not to participate in the Human Relations course an alternate course was provided. All students who completed the course were given an "s (satisfactory), and three hours credit.

The class was composed primarily of Counselor Education and Rehabilitation Counseling students with occasional registrants from Journalism, Nursing, Social Work, and Speech. Leadership was provided by both doctoral students and professors. There were four basic requirements for group leaders:

1. They had participated in a similar group as a member.

2. They had concluded course work in Group Processes and Procedures.

3. They had interned as a junior (co-leader) leader satisfactorily for one semester.

4. They serve as a supervised senior group leader.

Supervision was provided through the use of one or all of the following: Audio-tapes, video-tapes, and direct supervisor participation. The course was developed according to the guidelines recommended by the National Training Laboratory, (October, 1969), and was originally implemented under the direction of an NTL Fellow.

The class included both large group and small group experiences. The large group was often task-oriented and focused upon basic group dynamics issues: e.g. leadership, problem solving, cohesion, role analysis. The small groups were personal growth (encounter) oriented. They were designed to allow each member the freedom to experiment with new behaviors and to learn through constructive feedback.

The large group experience was usually designed to last no longer than one hour and to occur not more than twice a month. The small group met three hours per week for sixteen weeks. An additional weekend marathon experience was required. It included twenty hours of planned large and small group experiences.

Instrument. An instrument was developed according to the following procedure: Ten categories were established as being indicative of the major goals of the Human Relations class experience. These categories were: Self-awareness, self-acceptance, other awareness, other-acceptance,

communication skills (sending), communication skills (receiving), social skills (functioning), social skills (awareness), decision making (process), decision making (content). Statements for the inventory were developed for each category. For example, one of the statements in the communication skills (sending) category was "the ability to use language to express your thoughts and feelings." Subjects were asked to respond to each statement according to how they currently felt about their experiences in the human relations group. The following likert-type scale was provided.

0 = the human relations experience had no measurable effect on my educational and/or personal functioning

+1 = the human relations experience facilitated my educational and/or personal functioning

+2 = the human relations experience greatly facilitated my educational and/or personal functioning

-1 = the human relations experience hindered my educational and/or personal functioning

-2 = the human relations experience greatly hindered my educational and/or personal functioning

A statistical analysis of the reliability of the inventory is summarized in Table I below:

Table I

RELIABILITY OF HUMAN RELATIONS INVENTORY

	Correlation	Number
Split-Half	r = .99	166 subjects
Test-Retest	r = .97	15 subjects
Internal Consistency	r = .52 to .70	166 subjects, 51 items

The inventory was mailed to 340 subjects and 166 (49%) responded.

RESULTS

Data analysis. The data analysis will be presented as a response to the previously posed subquestions and concluded through a summation which focuses upon the major question: Does the introductory course in Human Relations serve an important function in the preparation of counselors for multiple settings and should such a course be continued as an integral part of counselor preparation?

> Subquestion 1 - Does the Human Relations course experience enhance the educational and/or personal functioning of the members who participate (do the participants view the experience as valuable)?

An analysis of participant responses indicates that participants perceive their Human Relations class experience as facilitative of their overall educational and/or personal functioning. Participant responses were encoded on a 1 to 5 scale and analyzed through mean scores. The overall mean rating was 3.9 (just under +1 questionnaire value with a S.D. of 0.52). Thus, the human relations experience was viewed as facilitative of the educational and/or personal functioning of the members who participated. (See Table II)

Table II

ANALYSIS OF HUMAN RELATIONS CLASS MEAN SCORES
BY SEMESTER ATTENDED

Semester	N.	Mean
1	21	3.9
2	31	4.0
3	10	3.8
4	27	3.9
5	18	3.9
6	11	3.9
7	18	4.0
8	30	3.6
Overall Mean	166	3.9

Subquestion 2 - What effect does the passage of time have on the participants level of personal and/or educational functioning and on their willingness to participate again in a Human Relations group?

Participants responses were analyzed according to the semester in which they were enrolled in the Human Relations class. An eight semester interval (January, 1970 through August, 1972) was included in the study. The ANCVA analysis indicated that time alone did not significantly effect ($P > .10$) the overall satisfaction of the members who participated nor did it decrease or increase the skills which they perceived the course taught. Participants would elect to participate again or not participate independent of the passage of time. There was no significant difference in participant responses over a three year period.

Subquestion 3 - Would participants elect to participate again in a similar Human Relations class experience?

The analysis revealed that most participants were both satisfied with their Human Relations class and would chose to participate in another

one. Of the 166 respondents, 144 (87%) would chose to participate in another human relations group while 22 (13%) respondents would not. The obvious conclusion is that people who participated in the Human Relations class and would participate in another rate the class higher than those who would not participate in another group. An ANOVA between those who would participate in another group, and those who would not participate in another group was significant ($P < 0.0001$).

Subquestion 4 - Who was (were) the most significant person (persons) in the Human Relations class: i.e., other members, leader, neither or both?

As previously discussed, there was no significant difference in participant responses over a three year period ($P > .10$). Subjects tended to rate the experience the same regardless of which semester they participated. This indicates that the group leaders were not greatly different from one another in the impact which they had upon the group participants. When the subjects rated the Human Relations experience based on whether the leader, another member, or other (both leader and member or neither leader nor member) was the most influential person(s) in the group, no significant difference ($P > .10$) was found. Of 166 respondents, 80 (40%) chose another member, 67 (40%) chose the group leader, and 19 (12%) responded to the "other" category.

Subquestion 5 - Was the marathon weekend an essential part of the Human Relations experience?

Of the 166 respondents, 136 (83%) did attend and 30 (17%) did not attend the marathon weekend. There was no significant difference between the overall response of those who did or did not attend the weekend ($P > .10$). The marathon weekend did not appear to make a significant contribution to the Human Relations experience.

Other. Both males and females tended to perceive the human relations experience the same way--facilitative of their personal and/or educational development. An ANOVA revealed no significant difference ($P > .10$) between the response of the 66 males (40%) and 100 females (60%) to the experience.

DISCUSSION

It appears that an introductory course which focuses upon the goals of personal growth and group skills through the use of a structured course which includes both task oriented and encounter group experiences serves an important function in the preparation of counselors for multiple settings. The human relations experience seems to facilitate the perceived educational and/or personal functioning of the participants independent of the particular leaders and/or other group members involved. Both male and female participants view the course as fulfilling and would elect to participate again.

The marathon weekend did not appear to make a significant contribution to the class experience.

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